

Appendix A
National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

Southwest Region
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Long Beach, California 90802-4213

APR 28 1999 FNSW031:OCF

David S. Clark
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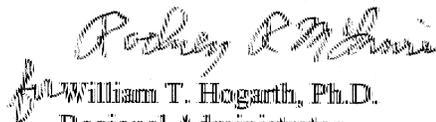
Dear Mr. Clark:

This letter responds to your April 5, 1999, request for the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to review the Department of the Navy's Executive Summary (ES) of a draft Environmental Assessment for the proposed Plasma Sound Source (PSS) ocean test to be conducted over 8 contiguous days between mid-August and September 30, 1999 off Camp Pendleton, California. The ES concludes that with the proposed mitigation, the tests will not adversely affect any listed threatened or endangered species and will not result in harassment or injury to any marine mammals in the test area. The ES describes mitigating measures to be incorporated into the test plan to minimize the potential for acoustic impact on marine mammals, including monitoring the surrounding area such that marine mammals will not be exposed to sound levels over 175 dB re 1 $\mu\text{Pa}^2\text{-sec}$ (defined as a 200 meter buffer zone around the test barge).

After reviewing the ES for the PSS ocean test and the most recent available data regarding impacts of impulsive sound on marine mammals, I have concluded that the likelihood that a marine mammal will be incidentally taken (including harassed) by the action is low. Thus, I do not recommend that you obtain an incidental harassment authorization under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. I do recommend that a dedicated watch consisting of at least two trained marine mammal observers should be utilized to monitor the buffer zone at all times during the PSS ocean test. With the implementation of the mitigation measures, the proposed tests should not affect species under the jurisdiction of NMFS that are listed as threatened or endangered species under the Endangered Species Act.

Thank you for coordinating with our office. If you have any questions regarding these comments, please contact Ms. Christina Fahy at (562) 980-4023.

Sincerely,


William T. Hogarth, Ph.D.
Regional Administrator

cc: F/PR - K. Hollingshead (w/ enclosure)

